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Summary of the recommendations of the Capacity Development Workshop for Improving Agricultural Productivity, Water-use Efficiency and Rural Livelihoods

(Bangkok, 28-30 January 2009)

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat has the honour to transmit to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its seventeenth session a summary of recommendations of the Capacity Development Workshop for Improving Agricultural Productivity, Water-use Efficiency and Rural Livelihoods, held in Bangkok from 28 to 30 January 2009, as an intersessional event preparatory to the seventeenth session of the Commission (see annex).

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Annex

Summary of the recommendations of the Capacity Development Workshop for Improving Agricultural Productivity, Water-use Efficiency and Rural Livelihoods

1. We, the representatives of various Governments, international and academic institutions, and major groups have participated in a Capacity Development Workshop for Improving Agricultural Productivity, Water-use Efficiency and Rural Livelihoods, organized jointly by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, the UN-Water Decade Programme on Capacity Development and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok from 28 to 30 January 2009, as an intersessional event preparatory to the seventeenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

2. We consider this Workshop to constitute an important step in advancing the implementation of key elements of the sustainable development agenda, as articulated in Agenda 21[a] and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development ("Johannesburg Plan of Implementation"),[b] and in formulating policy options and possible actions in order to overcome the obstacles and barriers identified at the sixteenth session of the Commission.

3. In the Workshop, we discussed issues and challenges concerning agricultural development and food security, agricultural water management, rural development, land-use planning and management, and the need for adaptation to climate change. We shared experiences and lessons learned on the pros and cons of various policy options and practical measures that could contribute to addressing the challenges identified under each of the thematic areas being considered under the current cycle of the Commission, namely, agriculture, rural development, land, drought, desertification and Africa.

4. The meeting recognized that achieving food security remains an important goal, especially in developing countries. The food crisis endangers millions of the world's most vulnerable and threatens to reverse the progress made so far in respect of achieving the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development. Policies and measures aimed at addressing the food security goal should address competition between food and energy crop production in a balanced manner. Recent food crises have also demonstrated the need to develop safety net programmes in order that Governments may react more quickly to rising food and input prices. The impact of these policies needs to be monitored regularly so as to identify gaps and solutions.

5. We understand that the proceedings of the meeting will be compiled by the Workshop's organizers and shared in due course with the participants. In the meantime, we would like to relay the following messages to the Commission on

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[a] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992*, vol. I, *Resolutions Adopted by the Conference* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

[b] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

Sustainable Development. The major groups have also provided inputs based on the discussions held during this Workshop, which will be reflected in the final report.

6. *Increase agricultural productivity.* Agricultural production systems are faced with a complex set of challenges, including climate change, desertification and drought, land and water availability, population growth, changing consumption patterns, the market variability of input factors and for agricultural products, and bioenergy demands. Improving agricultural productivity requires:

- A long-term vision developed with the participation of all stakeholders of how to alleviate food insecurity, accompanied by a plan of action consisting of short-, medium- and long-term measures to translate this vision into action
- Policy actions to enhance smallholder competitiveness and profitability, including access to markets
- Policies that will encourage appropriate investments in agricultural research, irrigation, education, rural finance, insurance, information systems, roads and market infrastructure
- Effective linkages between research and extension services
- Adoption of approaches to improved farming systems
- Support for local knowledge and practices

7. Implementation of the above policies needs to be backed up by an appropriate enabling environment and strengthened institutional governance.

8. *Promote integrated management of land and water resources.* Efforts to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development require not only provision of safe drinking water and basic sanitation services but also solutions that address the interlinked crises of land degradation, water scarcity and deteriorating water quality. These crises are made worse by increased fluctuations in climatic regimes. Achieving water security in relation to increased food production calls for changes in current water regimes on both the supply and the demand sides. Efforts in this regard should be directed at bridging capacity gaps at all levels, investing in new infrastructure, modernizing existing water delivery systems, and adopting improved water management practices and appropriate technologies. Similarly, land-use planning and management policies should target reversing land degradation trends and improving land productivity. Integrated management of land and water resources within hydrologic units is needed to help balance competing uses of land and water resources.

9. *Provide access to social capital.* In order to strengthen rural livelihoods, both farm and non-farm, broad-based investments in rural areas are required that benefit entire communities, and not only those who are engaged in agricultural activities. There is a need to support investment for the poor and their organizations. In this regard, enhancing the capacities of the rural population, through access to education, skills development and the use of information and communications technology, is needed to sustain the impact of investments made in rural development programmes. Moreover, in the case of small producers, policies should target inducing a transition from subsistence to market farming by increasing the access to assets, particularly land, entrepreneurial skills and social capital. The

partnership-building, including public private and community participation, should be actively encouraged in the context of policy development.

10. *Secure access to tenure.* Secure access to land and other natural resources, especially by marginalized groups, is central to sustaining livelihoods, especially in rural areas. The formulation of national land policies must allow for participation of the full spectrum of land users; and necessary assistance should be provided to poor and vulnerable groups, especially women, so as to enable them to take part in such participatory and transparent processes. In developing and implementing land management policies, diversity of the tenure and food production systems should be duly recognized.

11. *Adapt to climate change.* Climate change poses a serious threat to the sustainability of agricultural production systems and rural livelihoods. Adaptation needs to be viewed as a part of the coping strategy for poor rural people. Although adaptation measures will vary enormously, efforts should be targeted mainly at reducing vulnerabilities and strengthening coping capacities of societies and institutions in relation to their socio-economic conditions. Mitigating climate change through the sustainable management of land, forests and other natural resources should be encouraged through the provision of appropriate incentives to rural people. Efforts should be made to exploit the synergies between mitigation and adaptation measures through national action programmes and national adaptation programmes of action, among others. Development of adaptation and mitigation policies should be guided by country-specific situations and requirements and duly supported by appropriate funding for capacity development and technology transfer.

12. *Scale up successful practices.* Addressing sustainable development challenges in areas covered in this Workshop requires multidimensional efforts and strong political and civic resolve. Constraints and opportunities vary for each country and within different parts of a country. The challenges are well known and considerable knowledge and experience exist to address them. In this regard, policies and actions should be targeted at scaling up and mainstreaming successful practices.

13. Finally, we wish to thank the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the UN-Water Decade Programme on Capacity Development and ESCAP for organizing this Workshop, as well as other international institutions for their contributions to it.

30 January 2009